PS
2456
.B3

Class PS 2456
Book .B3
Copyright No.

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

FEB 28 1897

No. 3. Ten Cents. Per Year, One Dollar.

Southern Writers.

Biographical and Critical Studies.

Charles Egbert Craddock.

By William Malone Baskervill.

FEBRUARY, 1897.

Barbee & Smith, Agents,
Nashville, Tenn.

Copyrighted by Barbee & Smith, Agents, 1897.

JAN 17 1898
Register of Copyrights

1025
290

b67943c

Southern Writers.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL STUDIES.

PS2456
.B3

BY WILLIAM MALONE BASKERVILL.

Volume I.

16MO. 404 PAGES. 75 CENTS.

This present, and the preceding numbers—Irwin Russell, Joel Chandler Harris, Maurice Thompson, Sidney Lanier, George W. Cable—of Southern Writers have been put in a volume as indicated above.

Dr. Baskervill has somewhat modified the original scheme of these papers and enlarged their scope.

The succeeding numbers will include James Lane Allen, Thomas Nelson Page, Richard Malcolm Johnston, Mrs. Burton Harrison, Miss Grace King, "Sherwood Bonner," Mrs. Margaret Preston, Samuel Minturn Peck, and Madison Cawein.

When these shall have run their course serially they will be gathered into another volume, with a concluding chapter on Other Contemporary Southern Writers of Fiction.

Single numbers, in paper covers, as heretofore, 10 cents each.

BARBEE & SMITH, Agents,
NASHVILLE, TENN.

Charles Egbert Craddock.

THE appearance of Miss Mary Noailles Murfree as a writer emphasized the fact that the old order of the South had utterly passed away. For more than one hundred years the different generations of her family had been commonwealth-builders, not writers. Her great-great-grandfather, William Murfree, was a member of the North Carolina Congress which met at Halifax, November 12, 1776, for the purpose of framing a constitution for the new state. A year before, his son Hardy, just twenty-three years old, had been made a captain in the Continental line of his native state, and at the capture of Stony Point he had risen to the rank of major and was in command of a body of picked men. His descendants still treasure the sash that he used in

helping to bear the mortally wounded Gen. Francis Nash from the battle-field of Germantown. Before independence was won, he was promoted again, and after peace reigned once more Col. Murfree "was found busy with his plantation" on the banks of Meherrin River, near Murfreesboro, N. C., till 1807, when he removed to Middle Tennessee, settling in Williamson County, on Murfree's fork of West Harpeth River. Those early settlers had an eye for rich lands and pleasant places. The town of Murfreesboro, not far off, was named in his honor, and his family throve and married well.

Just prior to the Civil War Hardy Murfree's grandson, William R. Murfree, was a successful lawyer in Nashville and the owner of a large amount of property in and about the city. His wife was Priscilla, the daughter of Mr. David Dickinson, whose residence, "Grantlands," near

Murfreesboro, was in its day the most magnificent in that region. In this home was born, about 1850, a little girl to whom her parents gave the name Mary Noailles, but whom most people will prefer to remember as Charles Egbert Craddock.

In childhood a paralysis, which caused lameness for life, deprived her of all participation in the sports of children and set her bright and active mind to work to devise its own amusement and entertainment. Early sickness has more than once proved a blessing in disguise to the future writer of fiction by teaching him to train the observation, to live in good books, and to company with his fancies. It sent Scott to the country and to the fountains of legend and story, strongly inclined Dickens to reading, and laid Hawthorne upon the carpet to study the long day through. In the same way the Tennessee girl early developed a marked fondness for works of fic-

tion. It is easy to see that Scott and George Eliot were her favorites, and after reading with great earnestness one of their stirring and enlarging romances she would in her imagination body forth the entire story, investing mother, father, and other members of the large household with the characteristics of the persons of the powerful drama.

While an imagination originally vivid was thus strengthened, her life and surroundings encouraged a natural tendency to acute observation. After the cordial Southern manner, hospitality reigned in her home, and the wide family connection and many friends were equally hospitable. At the academy in Nashville, where she was put to school, she was associated with the daughters of the best families in her own and neighboring states. She must also have been thrown much with her brother and other boys, for few masculine writers show so thorough an under-

standing and appreciation of boy nature. And then there were the family servants, to whom every Southern child of the old régime was indebted for unique cultivation of the fancy and many lasting impressions. To this day, it is said, Charles Egbert Craddock finds more enjoyment in a boy or darky than in anything else.

This condition of society, along with her father's and mother's large estates, was swept away by the war. The old Dickinson mansion was still standing, and to this the family now went, expecting to stay only a short time, but remaining for years. This is the house of "Where the Battle Was Fought," and though the vivid description of it and the battle-field in the opening chapter of this novel is somewhat fanciful, enough of the reality remains to give us an accurate impression of the scenes amid which she now lived.

"By wintry daylight the battle-

field is still more ghastly. Gray with the pallid crab-grass which so eagerly usurps the place of last summer's crops, it stretches out on every side to meet the bending sky. The armies that successively encamped upon it did not leave a tree for miles, but here and there thickets have sprung up since the war, and bare and black they intensify the gloom of the landscape. The turf in these segregated spots is never turned. Beneath the branches are rows of empty, yawning graves, where the bodies of soldiers were temporarily buried. Here, most often, their spirits walk, and no hire can induce the hardiest plowman to break the ground. Thus the owner of the land is fain to concede these acres to his ghostly tenants, who pay no rent. A great brick house, dismantled and desolate, rises starkly above the dismantled desolation of the plain. Despite the tragic aspect of this building, it offers a certain grotesque sug-

gestion—it might seem in the mad ostentation of its proportions a vast caricature of succumbed prosperities. There is no embowering shrubbery about it, no enclosing fence. It is an integrant part of the surrounding ruin. Its cupola was riddled by a cannonade, and the remnants shake ominously with every gust of wind; there are black fissures in the stone steps and pavements where shells exploded; many of the windows are shattered and boarded up. . . . The whole place was grimly incongruous with the idea of a home, and as he [the hero of the story] was ushered into a wide, bare hall, with glimpses of uninhabited, unfurnished rooms on either hand, there was intimated something of those potent terrors with which it was instinct—the pursuing influences of certain grisly deeds of trust, for the battle-field, the gruesome thickets, the house itself, all were mortgaged."

As a recompense for this monoto-

nous and disheartening existence amid scenes of former happiness and splendor came the annual sojourn of the family during the summer months in the mountains of Eastern Tennessee, which was repeated for fifteen successive years. Breathing this invigorating air, the thoughtful girl also enjoyed the wild birds and wilder flowers, the sylvan glades and foaming cataracts, and companioned daily with the Blue Ridge, the Bald, the Chilhowee, and the Great Smoky Mountains, whose tops pierced the blue sky and whose steep and savage slopes were covered with vast ranges of primeval forest. These scenes were so indelibly etched upon her memory that in after-years a rare profusion of perfect pictures was easily obtainable. The very atmosphere itself of her life at this period seems to be preserved in the opening paragraph of "The Despot of Broom-Sedge Cove:" "On a certain steep

and savage slope of the Great Smoky Mountains the primeval wilderness for many miles is unbroken save by one meager clearing. The presence of humanity upon the earth is further attested only by a log cabin, high on the rugged slant. At night the stars seem hardly more aloof than the valley below. By day the mountains assert their solemn vicinage, an austere company. The clouds that silently commune with the great peaks, the sinister and scathing deeds of the lightnings, the passionate rhetoric of the thunders, the triumphal pageantry of the sunset tides, and the wistful yearnings of the dawn aspiring to day—these might seem the only incidents of this lonely and exalted life. So august is this mountain scheme that it fills all the visible world with its massive, multitudinous presence; still stretching into the dim blue distances an infinite perspective of peak and range and

lateral spur, till one may hardly believe that fancy does not juggle with fact."

But the deepest interest of a nature rich in thought, imagination, and wide human sympathy centered in the dwellers among those wild and rugged fastnesses. They were for the most part descendants of the earliest settlers in the Old North State, and more than three-quarters of a century before had climbed over the high ranges which form a natural boundary between Tennessee and her parent state and perched on the mountain sides or nestled in the coves of their new home. To them the great world outside and beyond the hazy boundaries of their mountain ranges remained an unknown land; and the tide of modern progress dashed idly at the foot of their primitive ideas and conservative barriers. There was no room for progress, for the mountaineers were not only satisfied with things

as they existed, but were unaware that there could be a different existence. For centuries no enlargement had come into their narrow individual lives and scant civilization, which to the casual observer seemed as bare and blasted as the "balds" upon the Great Smokies.

But to this acute and sympathetic observer were revealed not only the elemental qualities of our common humanity, but also the sturdy independence, integrity, strength of character, and finer feelings always found in the English race, however disguised by rugged exterior or hindered by harsh environment. Their honesty, their patriotism, their respect for law, their gloomy Calvinistic religion, their hospitality were in spite of the most curious modifications the salient points of a striking individuality and unique character. The mountains seemed to impart to them something of their own dignity, s o l e m n i t y and silence.

Their archaic dialect and slow, drawling speech could flash with dry humor and homely mother-wit and glow with the white heat of biting sarcasm or lofty emotion. Their deliberate movements and impassive faces veiled deep feelings and pent-up passions, and they could be as sudden and destructive as Nature herself in her fiercer moods, or as tender and self-forgetful as Mary of Magdala. Fearless of man and open foes, the bravest of them shuddered at the mention of the "harnt of Thunderhead" and shrank from opening the graves of the "little people." Every stream and cave had its legend or spirit, and towering crag and blue dome were chronicled in tradition and story. No phase of this unique life escaped the keen eye and powerful imagination of the most robust of Southern writers in this most impressible period of her life.

The growth of Craddock's art

can not now be traced with certainty, though it is known that she served an apprenticeship of nearly ten years before her stories began to make any stir in the world. The general belief, therefore, that her literary career began with the "Dancin' Party at Harrison's Cove," which appeared in the *Atlantic* for May, 1878, is incorrect. She used to contribute to the weekly edition of *Appleton's Journal*, which ceased publication in that form in 1876, and it is a little remarkable that her contributions were even then signed Charles E. Craddock. Two of her stories were left over, and one of them, published in "Appleton's Summer Book," in 1880, "Taking the Blue Ribbon at the Fair," rather indicates that she had not yet discovered wherein her true power lay. Although it is a pleasing little story, it is not specially remarkable for any of the finer qualities of her later writings; and it appears out of place

in a collection of stories published in 1895, as if it were a new production. The assumed name which her writings bore was finally determined upon by accident, though the matter had been much discussed in her family. It was adopted for the double purpose of cloaking failure and of securing the advantage which a man is supposed to have over a woman in literature. It veiled one of the best-concealed identities in literary history. More than one person divined George Eliot's secret, and the penetrating Dickens observed that she knew what was in the heart of woman. But neither internal nor external evidence offered any clue to Craddock's personality. The startlingly vigorous and robust style and the intimate knowledge of the mountain folk in their almost inaccessible homes, suggestive of the sturdy climber and bold adventurer, gave no hint of femininity, while certain portions of her writings, both in

thought and treatment, were peculiarly masculine.

In no way did Craddock betray "his" identity. Mr. Howells, who was the first to perceive the striking qualities of the stories, never suspected that the new writer was a woman; and Mr. Aldrich, who shortly succeeded him, and one of whose first acts as editor was to write to "My Dear Craddock" for further contributions, was equally wide of the mark, though he mused considerably over the personality of the remarkably original contributor. Once, indeed, he wrote asking how the latter could have become so intimate with the strange, quaint life of the mountaineers, but the pleasant reply threw no light upon the author's personality. Gradually, however, the mystery cleared away, though the final revelation was reserved for a particularly dramatic situation.

In the course of a year or two the editor and publishers learned that

M. N. Murfree was the author's real name, and Mr. Aldrich rather prided himself, we are told, upon directing his communications thereafter to M. N. Murfree, Esq., feeling very confident that one who evinced such knowledge of the law as appeared in her writings and wrote with such a pen could be no other than a lawyer. The manuscript of "Mr." Craddock certainly had nothing feminine about it, with its large, bold characters, every letter as plain as print, and strikingly thick, black lines. So liberal indeed was the author in the use of ink that the editor had his little joke, as he was writing to ask for what proved to be the powerful novel of the "Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains," remarking, "I wonder if Craddock has laid in his winter's ink yet, so that I can get a serial out of him." What was his surprise, therefore, as one Monday morning in March, 1885, he was called from the edito-

rial room, to find awaiting him below a young lady of slight form, about five feet four inches in height, with blond complexion and light-brown, almost golden hair, bright, rather sharp face, with all the features quite prominent—forehead square and projecting, eyes gray, deep-set, and keen, nose Grecian, chin projecting, and mouth large—who quietly remarked that she was Charles Egbert Craddock!

Miss Murfree's literary success really began with the publication of her collection of short stories, "In the Tennessee Mountains," in May, 1884. It was at once recognized that another Southern writer of uncommon art, originality, and power had entered into a field altogether new and perfectly fresh. Only here and there was discernible the slightest trace of imitation in conception or manner, while the atmosphere was entirely her own; and to the rare qualities of sincerity, simplicity,

and closeness of observation were added the more striking ones of vivid realization and picturing of scene and incident and character. Her magic wand revealed the poetry as well as the pathos in the hard, narrow, and monotonous life of the mountaineers, and touched crag and stream and wood and mountain range with an enduring splendor. All the admirable qualities of her art are present in this volume. The spontaneous, instinctive power of telling a story for its own sake proclaimed close kinship with Scott, while the exquisite word-painting and beautiful descriptions of mountain scenery, with all the shifting phases of spring and autumn, of sunset, mist, storm, and forest fire, could have been learned only in the school of Ruskin and of nature. In the profound and tragically serious view and contemplation of life she is the child of George Eliot and of the battle-scarred South. But her

real power, as is true of every writer that has been either an enriching or an uplifting force in human lives, rests upon a sympathetic understanding of human life. Her insight into the ordinary, commonplace, seemingly unpoetic lives of the mountaineers, her tenderness for them, her perception of the beauty and the wonder of their narrow existence is one of the finest traits in her character and her art. Through this wonderful power of human sympathy the delicately nurtured and highly cultured lady entered into the life of the common folk and heard their heart-throbs underneath jeans and homespun. She realized anew for her fellow men that untutored souls are perplexed with the same questions and shaken by the same doubts that baffle the learned, and that it is inherent in humanity to rise to the heroic heights of self-forgetfulness and devotion to duty in any environment. Indeed,

the key-note of her studies is found in the last sentence of this volume: "The grace of culture is, in its way, a fine thing, but the best that art can do—the polish of a gentleman—is hardly equal to the best that nature can do in her higher moods."

Each of these stories embodies a "higher mood" of some uncultivated, simple soul influenced by a noble motive, and the good lesson taught with equal art and modesty stirs the heart with refining pity and admiration. Cynthia Ware's long journeys on foot and heroic exertions are rewarded with the pardon of the unjustly imprisoned man whom she loves, only to find that he has never taken the trouble to ask who secured his release, that his love was but a little thing which he had left in the mountains, and that while she was waiting for him he was married to some one else. Through Craddock's skill we become witnesses of this heart-tragedy and enter

into the inner experience of a human soul which through suffering learns to adjust itself anew, "ceases to question and regret, and bravely does the work nearest her hand." Again it is the weak and slender Celia Shaw who painfully toils at night through the bleak, snow-covered woods to save the lives of the men whom her father and his friends had determined to "wipe out." Again and again in Craddock's writings the strange miracle of this sweet, trustful, loving, yet heroic girlhood appears amid the lonely, half-mournful life of the mountain folk, intensified by the attitude of the faded, gaunt, melancholy older women, "holding out wasted hands to the years as they pass—holding them out always and always empty"—with the grace, the beauty, and the pervasive fragrance of a wild rose in the wilderness. Our author seems to agree with George Eliot in thinking that "in these delicate vessels is

borne on through the ages the treasure of human affections."

Craddock's heroes — blacksmiths, constables, herders, illiterate preachers, and other rude mountaineers — are equally attractive in their way, and are drawn with an even tenderer and more skilful hand. She is a master in depicting those situations which touch the springs of pathos or thrill the heart with a generous elation. It does not matter whether it is merely the noble impulse which leads a Bud Wray, or in a later story a Mink Lorey—"Mink by name and Mink by nature"—to enthrone in one supreme moment the better part of his nature, or the settled purpose and lofty determination of a Simon Burney, who gallantly defends at the risk of his own life and gives a permanent home to the ill-tempered, worthless little "harnt" that walks Chilhowee, saying with noble simplicity: "I'll take keer of ye agin them Grims ez long ez I kin

fire a rifle. An arter the jury hev done let ye off, ye air welcome ter live along o' me at my house till ye die." The central idea or the strong situation, however, is not unduly stressed. The touches of incident and of humor and the exquisite landscapes leave unfading impressions. After thirteen years the ring of the metaled hoof upon the flinty path echoes in the memory, and the broad antlers of the noble stag garlanded with blossoming laurels stand out in bold relief on the edge of the mountain road. One can still see the highly imaginative picture of the gamblers throwing their cards upon the inverted basket, first by the light of tallow dip and then by the blaze of pine knots, while the moon shines without and the hidden mimic of the woods uncannily repeats their agitated tones. Nor is the reader likely to forget the touch of grim humor in the speech of the young mountaineer, glad that the "fightin' preach-

er" had prevented him from killing the outlaw and horse thief, yet naively remarking: "An' the bay filly ain't sech a killin' matter, nohow; ef it war the roan three-year-old, now, 'twould be different."

The large and solemn presence of Nature is never lost sight of, her various moods and manifestations being used, as a kind of chorus to interpret the melancholy or the emotion of the human actors. The narrative is inlaid with exquisite bits of landscape, serving not so much to disclose the range and minuteness of the author's observation—at least in her earlier works—as to give expression to the fitting sentiment or development to the appropriate passion. When the great beauty of the style with which these fresh and robust stories were clothed is taken into consideration, something of the present pleasure and the richer anticipation of the readers of 1884 may be imagined.

In September, of the same year, "Where the Battle Was Fought" appeared, a story in which Craddock gives an effective picture of the devastation caused by the Civil War. The plot and the villains intriguing for a young girl's property are purely conventional, but so far from being a misstep this is a story of richest promise. The unmistakable bent of the author's genius is, it is true, shown in such creations as Toole, Graffy Beale, and Pickie Tait, while her superb landscape-painting has never been used more suggestively and impressively. "There is something Hawthornesque in the part which inanimate nature is made to play in this novel—a gigantic personification that wails and loves and hates—speechless, yet full of speech; tearless, yet fraught with innumerable tears; voiceless, yet full of tongues and languages." But the hand that sketched Marcia and General Vayne gave tokens of possibilities far great-

er than could be attained through Marcellys, Dorindas, Letitias, and Aletheas, or through prophets of the Great Smoky Mountains and despots of Broom-Sedge Cove, for Nature in her higher moods has never produced a Romola, a Portia, a Colonel Esmond, or a Sir Roger de Coverley. As the penetrating Sartor, in speaking of clothes, observes: "Nature is good, but she is not the best; here truly was the victory of Art over Nature." No one had a better chance to know the old Southern gentleman than Craddock, and that she had made use of her opportunity is more than suggested in her realistic description of General Vayne's moral magnifying-glass: "Through this unique lens life loomed up as rather a large affair. In the rickety court-house in the village of Chattalla, five miles out there to the south, General Vayne beheld a temple of justice. He translated an office-holder as the sworn servant of the

people. The State was this great commonwealth, and its seal a proud escutcheon. A fall in cotton struck him as a blow to the commerce of the world. From an adverse political fortune he augured the swift ruin of the country. Abstract ideas were to him as potent elements in human affairs as acts of the Legislature, and in the midst of the general collapse his large ideals still retained their pristine proportions."

Such is the lifelike presentation of the sentiments of a certain type of old Southerner, and in the further portrayal of the one-armed ex-Confederate general the graphic touches of speech, manner, noble impulses, and actions are so true to nature that one readily recognizes the picture as a study from life. Though the story itself, however, does not present the orderly and artistic development and unfolding of a well-constructed plot, failing chiefly in coherence and a natural transition of

scene and incident, and though it contains much that is undeniably conventional, yet its many strong and original features and powerful close leave the impression that this new departure contains the promise of richest possibilities which, it may be hoped, Craddock will some day realize for the world.

In her next volume, "Down the Ravine," our author takes us back to the mountains, and gives us a book for boys not easily matched in juvenile literature. Avoiding all sentimental weakness and set preachments, and conveying its fine and healthy moral in the whole spirit and atmosphere of the story, she unfolds plot and underplot simply, naturally, and with fine artistic effect. Scene, incident, and character are fused in the glow of a well-ordered imagination. The ubiquitous imp of a small boy is there, of course, but can the world do without him any better than the story-books?

and also the saving grace of a sister's quiet love and shaping influence, suggested with rare art and delicacy in little Tennessee's constant presence. But the crowning merit of the tale is the fresh and original presentation of the old story of a mother's love and the beauty of confidence between mother and son in a rude mountain home. "Don't everybody know a boy's mother air bound ter take his part agin all the worl'?" she asks with simple candor, and when misfortune touches him every trace of her caustic moods disappears and she becomes as gentle and tender and wise as if she had been nurtured in a lady's bower. Years afterward the son had not forgotten how stanchly she upheld him in every thought when all the circumstances belied him. 'Taint no differ ez long ez 'tain't the truth," said his mother, philosophically. "We-uns will jes' abide by the truth." "And day by day as

he went to his work, meeting everywhere a short word or a slighting look, he felt that he could not have borne up, save for the knowledge of that loyal heart at home." This has all been told a thousand times, but never in a simpler, healthier, more natural way than in this delightful little volume. In unity of effect this is perhaps Craddock's most perfect story.

In the following October appeared "The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains," and almost every year since that time has witnessed the appearance of some new volume—"In the Clouds," 1886; "The Story of Keedon Bluffs," 1887; "The Despot of Broomsedge Cove," 1888; "In the Stranger Peoples' Country," 1891; "His Vanished Star," 1894; "The Phantoms of the Footbridge" and "The Mystery of the Witch-Face Mountain," 1895; while "The Jugglers," which has been running as a serial

in the *Atlantic*, has just appeared, and "The Mountain Boys" is announced for immediate publication. Though the result is on the whole disappointing—the rare promise of the author's earlier work not being fulfilled in her later more labored efforts—Miss Murfree has taken a place among the very best writers of purely American fiction. The too great regularity of production in which she has indulged has led her into dreary wastes of repetitious shallows, and still more frequently has weighted her stories with mannerisms which mar the beauty and perfection of their art. The reader soon begins to scent favorite epithets and grandiloquent phrases, to be on the lookout for the "gibbous" moon, the "mellow" moon, the "lucent, yellow" moon, and every kind of moon that ever was and never was, and to divine when the katydid is to "twang a vibrant note," or the night is to "sigh au-

dibly in sheer pensiveness," or the song of the cicada is to be "charged with somnolently melodious post-meridian sentiment."

A still more serious complaint may be urged against the author's tendency to overdo landscape pictures, and to make needless digressions. Miss Murfree is, above all things, a painter, and particularly in her earlier works has given abundant evidence that she is a real artist in adapting story and landscape to each other. Her description, too, serves a literary purpose, now expressing the fitting sentiment, anon developing the appropriate passion. She seizes and interprets physical features and natural phenomena in their relation to various aspects of human life with at times unerring precision, vigor, and dramatic force. Indeed, the scenery of the mountains is essential to the comprehension of the gloom of the religion, the sternness of the life, the un-

couthness of the dialect, and the harshness of the characters presented in her stories.

All her digressions are not irrelevant. Oftentimes what seems to be a mere digression is according to nature, and used with significant effect in the presentation of mountain scene, life, and character. The result is a complete and perfect picture. The mountaineers are proverbially slow of speech and of thought, and during their long reflective pauses in conversation the skilful narrator must interest the mind of the reader just as in real life the listener would seek something for his mind to dwell upon. This gives lifelikeness to the picture, and, like a sweet interlude in music, a charming bit of description serves to fill in delightfully the intervening moments which would otherwise seem unreasonably long and tedious. The opening pages of "The Despot of Broomsedge Cove"

reveal the author at work in her happiest vein and making the best use of this extraordinary gift. With a few skilful touches the corn-field, the winding road, the three mountaineers, each with his salient features of look, gait, and character, made known in the fewest possible words, and the glorious mountain view, are made to stand out before us as in real life, so that the reader becomes identified with the story and naturally shares in the conversation.

"'The Sperit has been with me strong, mighty strong, ter-day,' said Teck Jepson suddenly. 'I hev been studyin' on Moses, from the time he lef' the saidges by the ruver-bank,' he added, bridling with a sentiment that was strikingly like the pride of earth. Then as he gazed down at the landscape his face softened and grew pensive." "The great ranges were slowly empurpled against the pale eastern horizon,

delicately blue, for the sun was in the western skies. How splendidly saffron those vast spaces glowed! What purity and richness of tint! Here and there were pearly wing-like sweeps of an incomparable glister; and the clouds, ambitious, must needs climb the zenith, with piled and stately mountainous effects, gleaming white, opaque, dazzling. The focal fires of the great orb were unquenched, and still the yellow, divergent rays streamed forth; yet in its heart was suggested that vermilion smoldering of the sunset, and the western hills were waiting."

"'Twas tur'ble hard on Moses,' said Teck Jepson, 'when the Lord shut him out'n Canaan, arter travelin' through the wilderness. Tur'ble hard, tur'ble hard!'" During another pause the reader learns that this slow talker has an imagination aflame with the trials of Moses, the glories of Solomon, the atrocities of

Ahab and Jezebel; and in his ignorance it had never occurred to him that his Biblical heroes had lived elsewhere than in the Great Smoky Mountains. "Their history had to him an intimate personal relation, as of the story of an ancestor in the homestead ways and closely familiar. He brooded upon these narrations, instinct with dramatic movement, enriched with poetic color, and localized in his robust imagination, till he could trace Hagar's wild wanderings in the fastnesses; could show where Jacob slept and piled his altar of stones; could distinguish the bush, of all others on the 'bald,' that blazed with fire from heaven, when the angel of the Lord stood within it." In every way this is a model introductory chapter, and every incident, bit of description, explanatory digression, and situation serves as an admirable background for the heroic picture of the Despot, whose impressive per-

sonality, in spite of qualities that would naturally inspire aversion, compels our admiration.

But far too often in her later stories the author's descriptions of natural scenery and observations of natural phenomena are excessive. In this paticular novel they reach the point of downright padding. The pictures are exceedingly well done, and the observations are sometimes very acute and perfectly true; but they are altogether out of place, and serve only to interrupt the action and to make the reader chafe, till he learns to skip. As a specimen of this provoking method we may take the account of Parson Donnard's endeavor to find out whether it is a "human critter" or the devil himself that lights the nightly fires of the lonely forge. He and his hypocritical scamp of a son are sitting on a rock in the dead of the night with every nerve a-quiver; momently we are expecting a solution of the

mystery, but instead of this we are kept waiting with remarks about the stars, the darkness, the stony passes, the briers. Then we have shooting-stars and the clarion cock, and then again while the ignorant and superstitious old mountain preacher is intent upon his hand-to-hand grapple with the archfiend the author credits him with this series of sophisticated observations: "He noted how he seemed to face the great concave of the sky, how definite the western mountains stood against the starry expanse, how distinct certain objects had become even in the pitchy blackness, now that his eyes were in some sort accustomed to it."

It may readily be acknowledged that Miss Murfree's people are the people of the district she describes. Folk and mountains belong together. But she deals with life rather as a whole, as a community, a class, at best as a type. She has not succeeded in creating any indi-

vidual or distinct character. Even Cynthia Ware, Dorinda Cayce, Alethea Sayles, Letitia Pettingill, and Marcelly Strobe, the heroines in as many different stories, are but variants of one and the same type. Slight changes are introduced in adapting them to different situations, but the characters all seem to be drawn from the same model. A graver defect is noticeable in the author's treatment of her heroes, wherein she shows a fatal inability to sustain character. When the Prophet is introduced, revealing in the quick glance of his eye "fire, inspiration, frenzy—who can say?" the reader is thrilled at the prospect of a masterly delineation. He expects to travel along the narrow border-land between spiritual exaltation and insanity. But in only one of Miss Murfree's stories, "The Dancin' Party at Harrison's Cove," does she reveal a sympathetic understanding and

appreciation of the character of the minister. With the circuit-riders and pa'sons she seems to have had no personal acquaintance. They are drawn just as we would expect them to be depicted by one whose sole information was based on tradition, hearsay, and imagination. Nor does Craddock at any time exhibit that profound knowledge of the human heart and sympathetic insight into spiritual matters revealed by George Eliot in the character of Dinah Morris. Pa'son Kelsey remains hazy and indistinct throughout the story, the reader is left in doubt as to his sanity, and the catastrophe throws little light upon his character.

The Despot offered even a greater opportunity for masterly portraiture. In conception this is one of the most original and striking figures to be found in contemporary literature. This dauntless rider, singing his ecstatic psalms, this arrogant inter-

preter of "the Lord's will," this firm believer in his own might and goodness, captivates the imagination of the reader from the first moment of his dramatic introduction: "A moment more and the young psalmist came around a curve, galloping recklessly along beneath the fringed boughs of the firs and the pines, still singing aloud; the reins upon his horse's neck, his rifle held across the pommel of the saddle; his broad hat thrust upon the back of his head, his eyes scarcely turning toward the men who stood by the wayside. . . . The rider drew rein. The rapt expression of his countenance abruptly changed. He fixed imperative, worldly eyes upon the speaker. They were deeply set, of a dark blue color, full of a play of expression, and, despite the mundane intimations of the moment, they held the only suggestions in his face of a spiritual possibility. He had a heavy lower

jaw, stern and insistent. A firm, immobile mouth disclosed strong, even teeth. His nose was slightly aquiline, and he had definitely marked black eyebrows. . . . There was a strong individuality, magnetism, about him, and before his glance the peremptory spirit of his interlocutor was slightly abated."

After a few chapters, however, the author seems to lose interest in the working out of her original conception. The hero is discarded for other matters, while at the same time the author's grip of the narrative suffers loss, and the way is paved for irrelevant landscapes and digressions. Even the hero's connection with the tragedy of the story is accidental, and the heroine gradually absorbs the interest and the attention of the reader. The author almost invariably leaves her chief characters looking sadly, if not hopelessly, into the future.

Perhaps Miss Murfree has at-

tempted an impossible task in seeking to invest the meager life and primitive character of the mountaineers with an annual interest. When the author of "Jane Eyre"—a novel whose phenomenal success would have greatly enhanced the value of any work from her pen—was importuned to write a new story, she quietly answered: "I have told all I knew in the last one, and I must wait two or three years, till I learn something more, before I can write again."

But the sweep and power of Miss Murfree's narrative in all her finer stories is sufficient to carry the reader over greater difficulties than these. Story-telling is her true vocation. She is no essayist or historian drawn by the fashion of the time into the facile fields of fiction. Fresh material and picturesque character lend, it is true, their unique charms; but, after all, we are interested in this writer chiefly on account of the

stories she has to tell of the lives of men and women whose traits are in common with those of all times and all places. While, however, the reader's desire is to reach the end of any of her stories and "see how it comes out," still there are many places where he delights to linger. There are whole chapters in which scene, situation, and incident are handled without a flaw. The situations are admirably planned, the incidents inimitably related. The author can be descriptive or dramatic at will, and shows the command of a humor which has the tang but not the deep thought and mellow wisdom of George Eliot's.

In the meeting between Teck Jepson and Marcelly we lose sight of the author, so completely does she identify herself with the characters. We feel the fascination of this girl as she sits upon the ledge of a rock, and delight in the picture of the old dog lying wheezingly

down in the folds of her blue dress, "closing his eyes in a sort of blinking resignation" at the rain-storm, or rising to yawn, "stretching himself to his extreme length, rasping his long claws on the stones," and so rousing the Despot's impatience that he bids the hound "hush up!" Her stories abound in these graphic scenes. Nor would it be true to life if the humor were left out. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Scott, George Eliot, Lowell, Joel Chandler Harris, Ian Maclaren—all English writers who excel in depicting the life and character of the common people—make prominent their wit and humor. It is a characteristic of the race. The Tennessee mountaineer is noted for his dry, caustic speech, and under his slow drawl and rustic manners are concealed no little practical wisdom and shrewd observation. Of course geniality and playful fancy do not flourish in so harsh a region,

but there is no lack of pungent, pithy sayings. This humor pervades the mountains. "Wall, 'pears like to me," says the filly-like Mirandy Jane, "ez Brother Jake Tobin sets mo' store on chicken fixin's than on grace, an' he fattens ev'y year." Old Mis' Cayce quaintly remarks: "I 'member when I war a gal whisky war so cheap that up to the store at the settlemint they'd hev a bucket set full o' whisky an' a gourd, free fur all comers, an' another bucket alongside with water ter season it. An' the way that thar water lasted war surprisin'; that it war!" The dull old constable declares that "sech spellin' as Clem Sanders kin do oughter be agin the law! It air agin every law o' spellin'. Clem ought to be hung a leetle fur each offense. It jes' fixes him in his criminal conduct agin the alphabet." Dorinda Cayce, when the sheriff, who has just enjoyed her mother's good dinner, ac-

cuses her of harboring a fugitive, quietly remarks: "'Pears like ter me ez we gin aid an' comfort ter the officer o' the law ez well ez we could." Letitia Pettingill's bright sayings lighten up many a page of "In the Stranger Peoples' Country," as well as the lot of the seemingly deserted wife; and Marcelly's imperative old grandmother makes the doctor, and many another, writhe under the hail of her stinging sarcasm. Without this pungent humor the distinct flavor of the inner life of the strange, unique inhabitants of the mountains would be lost.

Here, then, we have originality, robust vigor, womanly insight, and the charm of a born story-teller brought to bear with genuine art upon a fresh field and a unique civilization. Much of her later work may have suffered from an attachment to the narrow sphere of the mountain folk; but such are her

strength of purpose and great capability that it is not unreasonable yet to expect the complete fulfilment of the promise of her earlier work, if the larger world may demand a share of her attention and energies.

4 8 5
3 7
4 4

NOVELS AND STORIES

BY

Charles Egbert Craddock

[Miss Mary N. Murfree].

The Mystery of Witch-Face Mountain, and Other Stories. 16mo $1 00

His Vanished Star. A Novel. 16mo... 1 25

In the Tennessee Mountains. Stories. 16mo 1 25

The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains. A Novel. 16mo 1 25

In the Clouds. A Novel. 16mo 1 25

The Despot of Broomsedge Cove. A Novel. 16mo 1 25

Where the Battle Was Fought. A Novel. 16mo 1 25

Down the Ravine. Illustrated. 16mo.. 1 00

The Story of Keedon Bluffs. 16mo 1 00

IN PREPARATION:

The Young Mountaineers. Illustrated. 12mo 1 50

The Juggler. A Novel. .....

Sold by All Booksellers. Sent, post-paid, by

Houghton, Mifflin & Co.,

BOSTON.

1 B Ap '09

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 015 762 777 6